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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians--Reading the Room

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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians — Reading the Room

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There are probably as many theories on how to achieve successful sales outcomes as there are number of salespeople calling on prospective clients. Salespeople throughout the world are bolstered by reading sales self-help books, attending workshops and being schooled by their managers on how to "make the sale" and yet only a handful of those salespeople ever find lasting success in selling a product or service.

Many of those reps, when calling on a prospective client are so mindful of their presentations and the intricacies of their product content that they forget the most obvious of facts and that is to simply look around the room to see the many clues that determine the tell-tale traits about the person with whom they are about to speak with. There is one inescapable fact in the buying and selling process, and that is that two people will inevitably sit across the table from one another in a room somewhere to negotiate the deal. For the astute salesperson, the ability to "read the room" will often help to determine the success or failure of that encounter.

When we are at work, our office, cubicle, workspace serves as the "home away from home." For many people, more of their waking hours are spent in a work environment as opposed to spending that same valuable time with family and friends. To compensate for being away from home, many people tend to decorate their offices with reminders and remembrances of their respective families and/or significant personal interests.

Pictures of the kids and the spouse, a knick-knack from that trip to Spain, a signed picture of a sports celebrity all may adorn the desks, walls and tables in any number of workspaces. Those signs are calling out to anyone that is welcomed to that space by saying, "this is who I am." Without a word being initially said by either the salesperson or the potential customer, a quick glance around the room may make the difference between a "sale" and "no sale."

In reviewing the events of a recent sales meeting, the astute Sales Manager will ask the salesperson to relate a little bit about the person they just had a meeting with.

"So, Bob can you tell me about your meeting with Albert Jones at XYZ Pharmaceutical?" asks the Sales Manager.

"Mr. Jones is a very nice guy." Or something like that may be the reps' initial response.

"Yes, I've known Albert for years and in fact, he is a very nice guy" replies the Sales Manager. "But Bob can you tell me more about Albert's surroundings?"

"Well, he had a lot of **NY Yankees** memorabilia in his office. I noticed a picture of **Derek Jeter**, a baseball signed by **Yogi Berra** and even an actual home plate signed by the entire 2011 team."

"I'm glad you noticed it's kind of hard to ignore." The manager might say. "But Bob, in your initial conversation with Mr. Jones, did you bring up anything to do with all that baseball memorabilia?"

If Bob didn't, he would have been truly missing a great opportunity to not only connect with Mr. Jones, but also be able to build a stronger relationship with this prospective client. After all, people buy from people; they don't buy from companies. If both parties can find some common ground outside of the intended sales meeting topics, then the buying and selling process can proceed a bit more efficiently.

In the case of Mr. Jones, it is clear that he would be more than willing to talk about his beloved **Yankees** at the drop of a suggestion. By getting the customer to speak about their interests, Bob can learn a wealth of information about this person even before the sales meeting begins in earnest. But more than looking around, Bob and every serious salesperson needs to understand that there are four emotions that rule a person's will to make a decision. These are:

1. Recognition
2. Romance
3. Money
4. Self-Preservation

If Bob truly understood these emotions and was able to recognize them through conversation or by simply noticing the objects strategically placed within the prospects' workplace, his chances of closing an order would be greatly enhanced. Here's how it works:

Recognition

If you enter the workspace environment of a person and notice that there are plaques on the wall regaling that person's achievements, you know full well that this person wants everyone to know that they have been acknowledged for, in their opinion, extraordinary accomplishments. A carefully placed compliment or an inquiry as to how they received such a distinguished award would immediately gain their attention. Or if there are pictures of the person with a famous sports, political or arts celebrity, a remark about the celebrity might spur on a spirited conversation as to how the person and that celebrity were even in the same room together.

Someone who places pictures, awards, achievement plaques on the wall of their office is telling you how proud they are of themselves and, by the way, not acknowledging those achievements might be perceived by some as an insult. These are people who like to be recognized for their achievements.

Romance

There are people who want to tell you about their families and significant others without

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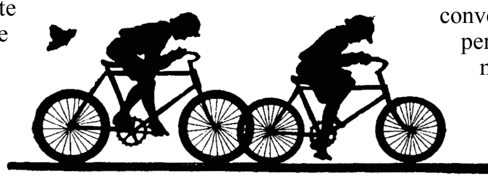
uttering one word. I cannot tell you how many times over the years upon entering a customer's office and seeing scotch taped to the wall a watercolor imprint of a child's hands with the message "I love you mommy." That same type of person is apt to have many family pictures, as well. What that tells you is that this person can't wait to tell you about how wonderful their kids are. Speaking about your kids and theirs is always a good way to get to know one another.

In the absence of pictures of children, many people will have photos of recent vacations. "Where was that a picture of you taken?" Recounting similar vacation experiences is always a good discussion ice breaker.

Money

For some people, a neatly kept office with expensive artwork on the walls is the image they want to convey to every visitor that enters. Upon entering this domain, you instinctively know that this person is serious about making a deal that will be most advantageous monetarily to their organization. Moreover, it is quite unlikely that there will be extraneous papers scattered about and that their desk will most probably be neat.



It's a good guess that this type of person may be a good negotiator and will probably be the most difficult in creating "small talk" before the meeting.

Self-Preservation

Self preservation is the instinct to act in your own best interest to protect yourself and ensure your survival. A person who practices self-preservation will probably work in a minimalist environment. That means there will be very few signs around this person's office to indicate anything personal about them. By noticing who they are, the wise salesperson will tailor their presentation to allay the fears of this person and show them how the product will ensure their survival.

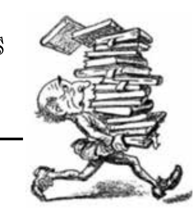
The bottom line is that lurking behind **recognition**, **romance**, **money** and **self-preservation** is fear. Fear of not being recognized; fear of not being loved; fear of losing money; and fear of not being protected.

A good salesperson, upon entering the prospects workplace will immediately read the room, understand the person with whom they are dealing and tailor the presentation to fit the needs and personality of the person on the other side of the table. The conversation in speaking to a person that is ruled by romance for example, is a whole lot different than speaking to a person ruled by money. It's not a good idea to have a "canned" presentation for everyone because every person has different ways of looking at a situation. An understanding of the surroundings creates an understanding of the person.

In 1970, **The Five Man Electrical Band**, a Canadian rock group from Ottawa, had a hit record called "Signs." In the song, they bemoan the number of signs all around them. In sales, the more signs that are noticed by the salesperson can spell the difference between a successful or non-successful encounter with a prospect.

__Mike__ is currently the President of __Gruenberg Consulting, LLC__, a firm he founded in January 2012 after a successful career as a senior sales executive in the information industry. His firm is devoted to provide clients with sales staff analysis, market research, executive coaching, trade show preparedness, product placement and best practices advice for improving negotiation skills for librarians and salespeople. His book, __"Buying and Selling Information: A Guide for Information Professionals and Salespeople to Build Mutual Success"__ is available on Amazon, Information Today in print and eBook, Amazon Kindle, B&N Nook, Kobo, Apple iBooks, OverDrive, 3M Cloud Library, Gale (GVRL), MyiLibrary, ebrary, EBSCO, Blio, and Chegg. __www.gruenbergconsulting.com__

Being Earnest with Collections — Materials Gifts in Libraries: Same Old, Same Old? Maybe Not



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Column Editor's Note: *I recall when I first started as Head of Acquisitions & Collection Development at the __University of Central Florida__ in 2006, one of the first trouble areas I had to address was gift receiving and processing. Since that time my thoughts on the importance of gift materials and the value they can have for academic libraries has moved from one extreme to another and settled somewhere in the middle. At first my thought was to make the review process and final disposition of gifts as efficient as possible. The focus was on keeping selection well focused and only adding gift materials that would have been purchased, while finding alternate ways to move unwanted gifts out of the library. We looked at ways to increase the amount of money brought in from the sale of gift books through library book sales and commission from a local dealer. Believing that if we were going to spend time in review and processing that we could at least offset some of the expense.*

In 2008, I collaborated with __Kelli Getz__, Assistant Head of Acquisitions at the __University of Houston__, and we looked at various ways to make sense of gift receipt and processing. We gave a presentation at the Acquisitions Institute in 2009, where we presented on, among other things, ways to increase sales and commission from gift materials. It seemed to be going well for a couple of years and then we experienced the fallout from the economic woes that seemed to reduce gift receipts and that was combined with new directions for utilization of space within the library, and staff reductions. It was during this time that my philosophy began to change and I became more focused on finding ways to eliminate or drastically reduce gift receiving.

However, there was always a concern about telling potential donors that the library is not interested. So, we continued to accept gift materials with the idea that we would do so while also being quiet about it. Now that I am at the __The University of Alabama__ I find that the same old issues of concern are once again coming to the forefront.

During a recent talk with __Steve Carrico__ I was reminded that the __University of Florida__ had also experimented with different policies and procedures related to gifts. Having worked many times with Steve over the years I knew that he had put much thought into how to better manage gift receiving and processing. I am delighted that my friend and colleague agreed to provide a nice overview of the recent steps taken at __UF__ to address gift receiving. I am sure __ATG__ readers who are

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